



New England Home Care

Taking Advanced Care Home

Testimony

In Support of SB 860: An Act Concerning Presumptive Medicaid Eligibility for Home Care
February, 17 2015

Dear Senator Flexer, Representative Serra and members of the Aging Committee,

I am Kimberly Nystrom, President of New England Home Care and I am writing to support SB 860: An Act Concerning Presumptive Medicaid Eligibility for Home Care

New England Home Care is a large provider of Medicaid home care services in Connecticut. We service over 100 towns with an average daily census of over 3000 Medicaid eligible clients. Gaps in eligibility pose a significant threat to home care access for the aging population. As Connecticut continues its rebalancing efforts, more Medicaid clients are moving from institutions to the home. We have worked very hard with the State to collaborate with these efforts and our goal is to continue.

Gaps in eligibility limit access

If an individual is receiving needed home care services and eligibility lapses, the home care provider cannot assist them with either getting their medications or access to other services. In our experience, when there is a lapse in eligibility, it is **NOT** because the individual does not qualify. Our clients who lapse are in great need of care, have little to no family or support, clearly qualify and do not have easy access to computers, phones or transportation.

In face of needed services, home care providers are sometimes forced to discharge these individuals as they run out of resources to sustain providing care. This is frequently a bad outcome as the home care provider is usually an individual's only access to a broader health care system. In many instances, the home care providers go to great lengths to prevent discharge but it is at a very high cost. It further limits the home care provider's capacity to take other eligible individuals home in a timely fashion. The process can take weeks and months.

Gaps in eligibility cost money

It is very difficult for home care providers to take individuals safely home from hospitals or nursing homes if there is an eligibility gap or delay. Right now, when individuals present as ineligible, even if previously on service or recently eligible, we cannot obtain authorization from Value Options or CHN, the State's Medicaid ASOs. These individuals are then forced to stay in hospitals longer or to go home without services. Without needed access to skilled home care services, they are at high risk for returning or using the emergency rooms for back up care.

Presumptive eligibility provides a way to ensure seamless access for the aging population and to also provide relief to home care providers without a rate adjustment. Home care is a cost effective and proven money saver to the State. Connecticut should focus legislative efforts to enhance access to home care through a presumptive eligibility system which supports the interests of Connecticut's aging population.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Nystrom
President New England Home Care

Chair of the Board of Directors
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